

Practice Filial Respect by Holding Honoring Elders Day

從敬老節 來實踐孝道

比丘近梵 講於2011年9月25日金聖寺
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吳泊道 英譯 Translated into English by Peter Wu



一九九二年是我第一次到萬佛聖城，在萬佛城住了五個月，很幸運碰到了第一個敬老節，那時上人提倡敬老懷少。我聽到上人是這樣講的，上人說：「每一年在秋天，天氣不冷也不熱時來舉辦敬老節。」為什麼要舉辦敬老節？除了對長者表示關心照顧之外，因為在萬佛聖城有中小學，所以上人是用一個很有智慧的方便法門來設立敬老節，讓學校的學生有實踐對長輩的尊敬，或是孝道的機會，因此創辦了敬老節。

敬老節本來只有在萬佛聖城舉辦，現在法界佛教總會所有的分支道場，每一年每個地方都有敬老節，而且規模越來越大。在萬佛聖城也是一樣，很多長者每年都在期待這一天。在美國的社會，很多老人住在老人院裡，相當孤單，所以通常他們參加敬老節以後，就在期待著明年這一天的來臨，可見敬老節對他們來講是一個很重要的日子。

我們知道，上人從小大家就稱他為「白孝子」，他母親往生的時候，曾經在母親的墳墓旁邊守孝三年，照道理守孝三年就表示盡孝道了，但上人怎麼講呢？他說他這個行孝道是沒有時間限制的，是盡未來際的。所以上人就發願要照顧所有的老人，對所有的老人恭敬孝順，因此上人一輩子也是用「恭敬」和「孝順」來教導年輕人、學生、小孩子來實踐孝道，這是萬佛聖城創立的宗旨之一。

今天是九月二十五日，再過三天就是九月

I first came to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) in 1992, and I lived there for five months. I was fortunate to experience the first Honoring Elders Day. It was the Venerable Master's idea to honor the elders and cherish the youth. He said, "Every autumn, when it's neither cold nor hot, we can hold Honoring Elders Day." Why should we hold this event? To express that we care about our elders. In addition, since CTTB has an elementary and a high school, the Venerable Master skillfully applied a wise expedient method to give students an opportunity to practice respect to elders and to practice filial respect. That's how Honoring Elders Day was established.

Originally, Honoring Elders Day was held only in CTTB. Now, every branch monastery of DRBA holds this event every year, on a larger and larger scale. It is the same in CTTB, where many elders look forward to this day every year. In America, many elders are lonely living in nursing homes. After the event, they look forward to coming back next year. You can see how much Honoring Elders Day means to them.

We know that the Venerable Master was called "Filial Son Bai" since he was young. After his mother died, he stayed by her graveside for three years, observing filial respect. Usually, people say that three years is enough to fulfill one's responsibility of being filial. However, what did the Venerable Master say? He said that practicing filial respect has no time limits and no boundaries into the future. Venerable Master made a vow to look after all elders, to be respectful and filial to them. Throughout his life, he used the principle of being respectful and filial to teach young people, students and children how to live a filial lifestyle. That was one of the principles and purposes of establishing CTTB.

Today is September 25. Three days later, on September 28, is Confucius' birthday. Confucius was a great sage and teacher of China, the first and unsurpassed sage. The education that Venerable Master

二十八日，是孔子的誕辰，孔子是中國的至聖先師，是第一個至高無上的聖人。上人所提倡的教育，基本上就是以孔子儒家的學說來教育學生的，因此萬佛聖城中小學就是教學生怎麼孝順，敬老節就是讓學生來實現對長輩的孝順跟恭敬，每年學生都有這個機會，要準備表演一些節目，還有佈置場地，甚至要做善後處理，但是不管怎麼辛苦，每個學生都非常高興有這樣一個實際體驗的機會，所以不僅理論上是這樣，在真正的實踐上也是很重要的。

我們都知道，孔子對中國的影響到現在已經有兩千五百六十一年了，由此可證孔子對中國人的教導是歷久不衰的。今天在灣區有一個祭孔大典，這個祭孔大典已經舉辦很久了，是由灣區的中文學校，還有很多單位聯合舉辦的，這個活動很有意義，可見中國人對孔子是非常尊崇的。孔子的教導是以孝道為主，所以打開《論語》從〈學而篇〉開始，很多都講孝道。孔子是這樣講恭敬和孝道的：「君子務本，本立而道生，孝悌也者，其為仁之本歟。」是說我們要做一個正人君子，就要把根本做得很好。那麼什麼是做人的根本呢？孝順跟恭敬就是做人的根本。如果你孝順跟恭敬做好了，人有根以後道德自然就生出來了。所以這個道德不是天生就有的，是從生活中去實踐來的。

一般人要有道德；出家的人也要有德行，就是要有道德。出家人如果沒有德行，第一，居士對出家人不會產生恭敬心；第二，修道不會有成就，因為沒有根本。因此上人也講「人道盡，佛道成。」人道做好了，佛道才會成就。所以修行也是一樣，要從根本的地方做起，對父母要孝順。但是佛教在這地方心胸是更寬廣的，為什麼？因為我們一般人都說，這是我的父母，或是有人結婚了，有了岳父母，或是有了公公、婆婆，親戚關係上的父母。但是在佛教，《梵網經》裡頭說：「一切男子是我父，一切女人是我母。」所有世界上的男人都是我的父親，所有女人都是我的母親。這是怎麼講法呢？因為佛知道，在過去生中，每個人都是互為兄弟，互為父母，互為姐妹。就是每個人過去生中可能你是他的父親，他是你的兒子，可是這一生就對調了，這個關係是變來變去的，但是我們凡夫看不出來，因此佛告訴我們，我們過去生中有這樣的關係，這個人可能是你的父親，可能是你的母親，我們要恭敬

advocated was based on the teachings of Confucius. Therefore, the elementary and high schools in CTTB teach students how to be filial. Honoring Elders Day is a way to practice being filial and respectful to the elders. Students have the opportunity every year to prepare programs to perform, set up stages and even clean up after the events. But no matter how tiring the work, every student is happy to have an opportunity to practice. The theory is important, and real practice is just as important.

We all know that Confucius has influenced China for 2,561 years. The teachings of Confucius are everlasting for Chinese people. Today in the Bay Area, people commemorate his birthday with great ceremony, which has become a long-running tradition. With the collaboration of Bay Area Chinese Schools and other organizations, the event has turned out to be very meaningful. It was obvious that the Chinese community deeply honors and respects Confucius. He mainly taught us to have filial respect. From the first chapter of The Analects, "On Studying," onwards, many chapters talk about filial respect. Confucius says, "The exemplary person focuses on the essentials. Once the essentials are established, the Way naturally comes forth. Wouldn't you say that filial respect and brotherhood are the essentials of humanity?" It means that in order to be a proper and exemplary person, we must base ourselves in the essentials and do it very well. So what are the essentials of being a human? They are filial respect and respect for others. If we do these well, then our virtue in the Way will naturally come forth. This virtue is not something we are born with; it is revealed through our practice in everyday life.

We all have to be virtuous. Monastics must have virtuous conduct; in other words, they need to have virtue in the Way. Otherwise, firstly, laypeople would not respect them. Secondly, the monastics wouldn't be successful in their cultivation should they be missing the essentials. The Venerable Master said, "When a person knows how to be a human to the utmost, Buddhahood will be realized naturally." We need to be firmly established in human propriety in order to realize Buddhahood. It's the same with cultivation. We have to begin with the fundamentals, that is, we must be filial towards our parents. Buddhism is more vast and open-minded in this respect. Why? Normally, we say that these are my parents or, when we get married, these are my parents-in-law. We limit ourselves to parents directly related to us. In Buddhism, however, the Brahma Net Sutra states, "All men are my fathers; all women are my mothers." Every man in this world is my father; every woman is my mother. How do we explain this? The Buddha can see that everyone is related to each other as brothers, parents and sisters. In past lives, you may have been his father and he your son. And in this life, the roles are reversed. The relationships are constantly interchanged. But we common people cannot perceive this. The Buddha informed us about such relationships in our past

他、孝順他，所以這心胸是非常廣大的！

每個人在修行過程中，都希望幫助自己的父母離苦得樂。所有學佛的人都知道，幫父母離苦得樂最快的方法，就是往生極樂世界，那裡沒有苦了，而且到那邊最後一定成佛，不會在世間上受六道輪迴。所以發的心是很廣大的，就是把每個男人當成是我們的父親，把每個女人當成是我們的母親這樣子來看待，這樣子我們就會產生一種恭敬心和孝順心，想幫助我們的父母，想救度我們的父母，不只是今生的，過去生的、生生世世的，我們都想來度他們離苦得樂。

在我們修行過程中，最困難的就是姪欲心，因為有了姪欲心，所以我們修行不容易成功，姪欲心是修行上很大的障礙。所以佛就講一切男子是我父，一切女人是我母。你想想看，我們每個人對自己的父母會產生姪欲心嗎？不可能！如果我們對每個人都用這種心態來看待的時候，這姪欲心就生不出來了，這是修行上一個很好的助益。這也可說是在佛教上的一種大孝，這個大孝是對每個人就像父母一樣來孝順。所以佛教也是講究孝道的。大家都知道《地藏菩薩本願經》就是一本孝經，是地藏王菩薩過去生中行孝的事蹟。如果在孝道上能夠實踐，做人的根本都有了，那麼修行的本錢也有了，要成就是很容易的。

今天各位長者來到這裡，除了參加敬老節活動之外，最重要的就是讓那些年輕的人能有個恭敬孝順的機會。我們剛剛誦〈普門品〉就誦到了觀世音菩薩是：「應以長者身得度者，即現長者身而為說法。」所以你們這些長者也可說是在示現，示現以長者的身分來教導這些年輕人，讓他們知道怎麼做，怎麼來修行；就像親偉師所講的，你們一生當中有很多寶貴的經驗，這是一個很好的傳承，可以傳給下一代，教導給下一代，讓他們成為一個更好的人。敬老節時很多人聚在一起，其實很多人在一起也是互相學習、互相成就的好機會。

我希望各位長者今天在這裡能夠過一個非常愉快的敬老節，也將在這裡所學到的，回家以後可以做為日常生活的一部分，這樣敬老節就更有意義了。

lives. Since this person could have been our father or mother, we should be respectful and filial. So you can see how vast this mindset is!

Each of us during our cultivation wishes to help our parents leave suffering and attain bliss. All disciples of the Buddha know that the quickest way to help parents leave suffering and attain bliss is by helping be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. In that land, there is no suffering; everyone is guaranteed to accomplish Buddhahood there, and will no longer undergo rebirth in the six realms of existence. So we should bring forth a vast mind to regard every man as our father and every woman as our mother. In this way, we can bring forth a respectful and filial attitude. We should not only wish to help cross over our parents of this life, but also cross over all our parents of previous lives and in life after life so they can leave suffering and attain bliss.

The most difficult obstacle of cultivation is sexual desire. Sexual desire is the greatest obstacle for cultivators and makes it hard to accomplish the Way. Therefore, the Buddha spoke in the sutra that every man is our father and every woman is our mother, which was the other intention for speaking the sutra. Just think about it. Is it possible for us to give rise to sexual desire towards our own parents? No. If we regard everyone in this way, there is no way we'll give rise to sexual desire. This is a useful and beneficial tool in cultivation. In Buddhism, we call this great filial respect, which regards everyone with filial respect the same way we are towards our own parents. Therefore, in Buddhism, we emphasize filial respect. Everyone knows that the *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store* is a sutra about filial respect. It describes the filial deeds and practice of Earth Store Bodhisattva during his past lives. If one can practice filial respect, all the fundamentals of being human are fulfilled. The foundation of cultivation is likewise established. It then becomes very easy for us to accomplish the Way.

Today, the most important reason for attending the events is giving youths an opportunity to practice filial responsibilities and respect. We just recited the Universal Door Chapter which talks about Guan Yin Bodhisattva, saying, 'If someone should be crossed over by an elder, then Guan Yin Bodhisattva will appear in the form of an elder to speak the dharma for him.' So you can say that you have all appeared as elders to teach the young how to behave and cultivate. Just as Shramana Qin Wei said, "In this life, you have many precious experiences which can be passed down to people of the next generations, so they can be better people." On Honoring Elders Day, many people gathered together. In fact, being together is a great opportunity to learn from each other and help each other accomplish the Way.

I hope everyone had a good time today. May you be able to put into practice what you've learned on this day when you go back home. In this way, Honoring Elders Day would be even more meaningful.